

ATTACHMENT AND TEMPERAMENT AS DETERMINANTS
OF THE CONFLICT IN THE CLASS (SCHOOL)

ATAȘAMENTUL ȘI TEMPERAMENTUL CA FACTORI DETERMINANȚI
AI CONFLICTULUI ÎN CLASĂ (ȘCOALĂ)

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Abstract

Attachment, as a complex mental process, is one of the most important processes identified by researchers in the fields of psychology, ethology, neurology, etc. and a determining factor of many choices that we turn into habits and integrate into our behavioral area.

Temperament, on the other hand, with its innate character has an incomprehensible role yet fully. Concerned about the causes that may disturb the balance of a class of students and studying the literature, we discovered the importance that attachment and temperament can have in this regard. At the same time, we have found that, in mancazacy respects, the research into the relationship between attachment, temperament and conflict is still in its infancy and deserves more attention. This is how we came to cut from the multitude of possibilities to approach attachment and temperament, the situation in which these processes are determinants of conflict in the classroom.

Keywords: attachment, conflict, aggression, group, class

Rezumat

Atașamentul, ca proces mental complex, este unul dintre cele mai importante procese identificate de cercetătorii din domeniul psihologiei, etologiei, neurologiei etc. și un factor determinant al multor alegeri pe care le transformăm în obiceiuri și le integrăm în aria noastră comportamentală.

Temperamentul, pe de altă parte, cu caracterul său înăscut, are un rol de neînțeles încă pe deplin. Preocupați de cauzele care pot perturba echilibrul unei clase de elevi și studiind literatura de specialitate, am descoperit importanța pe care atașamentul și temperamentul o pot avea în acest sens. În același timp, am constatat că, în manieră managerială, cercetarea relației dintre atașament, temperament și conflict este încă la început și merită mai multă atenție. Așa am ajuns să decupăm din multitudinea de posibilități de abordare a atașamentului și a temperamentului, situația în care aceste procese sunt determinanți ai conflictului în clasă.

Cuvinte-cheie: atașament, conflict, agresivitate, grup, clasă

1. Attachment as a determining factor of conflict

As a scientific concept, attachment has a long history, but beyond the controversies that have arisen between scientists about the meanings it must contain, it is important that, over time, the

interest in studying attachment has not diminished for a moment. On the contrary, year after year, the number of articles on the subject is increasing, so today we have an impressive number of research, book chapters, even books on attachment. He who would first aim to address the field of attachment would certainly be amazed by the multitude of relationships and the power of influence he has regardless of the complexity of personality levels and the peculiarities of age at which he acts.

But before we see what and how the attachment can influence the triggering and conduct of conflicts in the classroom, it is necessary to capture the complexity and understand the importance of this process. The first researcher to report the existence and importance of a child's relationships with his parents was Sigmund Freud. Even though Freud did not use the concept of attachment, he described it and explained, of course, from the perspective of his theory, psychoanalysis.

According to this theory, from birth, the child will be strongly imbued with a strong anxiety, basic anxiety, as Freud called it. The existence of this intense fear will cause the newborn to become strongly and definitively attached to his mother. Unfortunately, the fact that Freudian psychoanalysis was built around the sexual instinct, the one that triggers vital energy, libido, made the child's attachment relationship with his parents a Oedipian one. According to the myth of Oedipus, which Freud considered to describe a general human situation, boys are destined to be sexually attracted to their mother and consider their father a rival whom they must eliminate in one form or another.

Freud took precautions and described sexuality as general as possible, thereby understanding that sexual desire is not limited to sexual desire, but refers to any act that produces pleasure [6]. But with all precautions, Freud's sexual theory was strongly criticized as exaggerated.

Disturbed by Freud's inflexibility and the unsatisfied exaggerations of psychoanalysis, a significant number of followers chose to move away from the master, led by Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler. For Jung, the attachment is purified by the domination of sexuality, but its importance remains equally great, acquiring archetypal forms [8].

The Mother's Archdiocese, whether we include it in the archetype of the Anime or treat it separately, is the expression of an archaic relationship that characterizes humanity as a whole. Thus, in Jung's conception, the attachment relationship between the mother and her child is not a relationship that is built only during the life of the individual but is determined primarily by psychic structures deeply embedded in an area of our psyche which includes the essential experiences of our ancestors, the collective unconscious [8].

The one who is unanimously accredited as the creator of attachment theory, John Bowlby, is also one of those who were initially enthusiastic about the psychoanalytic point of view, but later came to detach from it. Bowlby could see in the extreme conditions created by the war that those children who lose both their parents at an early age and end up in orphanages, will develop behaviors that highlight the installation of deep trauma to the unconscious [1].

Thus, without insisting on the Oedipal nature of the relationship between the child and his mother, Bowlby managed to draw attention to the special existence and importance of the attachment relationship between the child and his mother. His pertinent remarks on the attachment gave a decisive impetus to further research.

Fortunately, about the time when psychologist Bowlby imposed the term attachment, ethology researchers, interested in the laws underlying animal behavior, put forward other arguments about the importance of the attachment relationship between mother and child [1].

The phenomenon studied by Konrad Lorenz and named by him - imprinting, shows that, from birth, puppies are instinctively set to follow their mother wherever she goes [9].

It is true that this phenomenon has been studied mainly on bird species and that in higher animals, including humans, this instinctual process is more difficult to demonstrate, but this does not tarnish in any way its importance. It is known that in humans and mammals in general the behavior is less determined by instincts and depends more on learning, but the existence of the imprinting phenomenon draws attention to the fact that nature has truly created strong relationships between chicks and mothers and that these relationships are worthwhile to study carefully in higher animals as well.

This is what American researcher Harlow did, who studied orphans of red monkey with a tail (rhesus). Harlow created for these chicks two surrogate mothers, identical up to a point. The only difference between the two mothers was that one was covered with a soft blanket, while the other mother's blanket was missing, which caused the metal structure from which it was built to be discovered, but instead had a milk bottle. The researcher's intention was to observe what the chick would choose: the mother who provides food or the mother who offers comfort and safety. The option of the chicks was clear by choosing the surrogate mother covered with a blanket! This means that in the first place is comfort and safety and only then the need for food. In fact, the chick often left the safe area, emptied the bottle offered by the unwelcome mother and ran back to the safe area.

Harlow's research calls into question how the pyramid of needs was built by Maslow, who, as is well known, placed emotional security on the second step, according to needs such as hunger thirst, sexual instinct, etc. This research has shown without a doubt that the emotional security of any mammalian chick is not a second-order need, but it is even more important than many of the needs considered by the primary Maslow and placed on the first stage of his pyramid.

But research opening up new horizons in the field of attachment and emotional security, research that has given a decisive impetus to current studies, belongs to researcher Mary Ainsworth. She has the merit of discovering and demonstrating that the attachment should not be regarded as Bowlby did, as a single relationship, of the type "is or is not", because everything is much more nuanced. Specifically, we have not one but several types or forms of attachment [1].

She built an ingenious procedure called the Strange Situation, in which she manipulated three subjects in eight sessions of three minutes each: a mother with her 8 – 18 month old child and a stranger. The mother and the stranger either come or go while the child is playing. Based on data collected using the Strange Situation Procedure, Ainsworth was able to track children's behavior and learn how to build the attachment relationship in the first months of the child's life, (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970).

The most important discovery was that there are significant differences between the behaviors of children involved in the Strange Situation. So significant that, beyond individual differences, it was possible to group them into broader categories whose criteria for separation were the emotional

reactions of children manifested during studies. Today, we can describe four types or forms of attachment.

Within the secure attachment, the main characteristic transmitted by the child's behavior is the trust he gives to the mother. The child who possesses such an attachment expresses the certainty that the mother is there to protect him and feels that she is attentive to his security needs. Of course, he will not explore the room without making sure from time to time that his mother is there and that exploring the room can continue without any unpleasant surprises. But in the process of taking over space, he shows more courage, more initiative and more inventiveness than children with other forms of attachment. Also, like any child, he/she gets upset when her/his mother leaves the room, but this upset disappears easily when the mother returns, bringing with her the certainty that everything in the environment is fine.

The type of mother-child relationship that has been called an insecure/ avoidant attachment presents itself as a different form of emotional balance compared to what I described as a secure attachment. Apparently, the child does not seek to make sure of the parent's affection and does not seek to be around him all the time. His behavior seems independent, because the child can engage in environmental exploration without the need to ensure that the adult is attentive to what he is doing. But for a careful observer, it will become obvious that this behavior is only a facade. In fact, when the mother leaves the room, the child masks his stress, and when she returns, the joy. It tends to reject the mother's consolation, which researchers have interpreted as a way in which the child shows that the mother is not perceived as a complete source of security. Specifically, it is passed on to us that his mother is not perceived as fully connected to his emotional needs.

The resistant/ ambivalent non-securing attachment lowers us one step lower on the scale of the child's affective insecurity. The child's behavior towards the mother, especially when she leaves and returns to the room, are no longer so predictable. There are times when the child's relationship with the mother is typical of the secure attachment. The child seeks the approach of the mother, wants to interact with her, behaves balanced, so that suddenly, apparently without reason, to reject any closeness and not at all interested in exploring the environment, as an emotionally secure child does. Such behavioral alternation from one extreme to another extreme can be deconcentrating for an uninformed person. But researchers point out that behavioral ambivalence has its origin in the child's distrust of the way the mother acts. The unpredictable and inconsistent behavior of the mother is thus a source of stress and emotional discomfort for the child and becomes the major source of the child's distrust in his mother [3].

In terms of the latest attachment style, disorganized attachment, it is the rarest common pattern of attachment. This style of attachment is formed in extreme conditions, when the child is neglected almost all the time, and lack of care takes severe forms. Deprived of the physical contact with his mother, the child manifests various forms of frustration and stress, making the unpredictability of his behavior significantly greater than in the case of ambivalent attachment. If we add the probability that there will be repeated abuses on the child, we understand why this type of attachment is rare to extreme. So rare and extreme that there are researchers challenging its existence [14]. What is very interesting is that an increased incidence of this form of attachment has been reported in mothers with severe depression or, as we will show in another context, depression appears to be transmitted to a large intergenerational extent [7].

It is not difficult to notice that the ordering of the four major types of attachment has become somewhat decreasing, from a form of normal emotional balance to forms increasingly far from normal. We are almost tempted to talk about forms of imbalance and not emotional balance in the relationship between mother and child. And the fact that the dynamics of the relationship between mother and child is not without problems at all justifies us to consider attachment as a major source of conflict in general and, of course, conflict within the class and school.

One last particularly important fact about attachment is that psychologists have pointed out that it is not specific only to childhood and adolescence when we are still dependent on parents or by other people who take care of or support us. Psychologists have highlighted its manifestation with the same power in adulthood. In other words, an adult with an insecure attachment will manifest itself behaviorally in accordance with the typology we have described above. It is true that the relationship with parents takes a back seat, but adults develop very strong forms of attachment with their life partners [10], with their mentors, [2] or, even with God, [5] and these forms of attachment are perfectly calcified on those developed in the first months of life.

2. The role of temperament in the emergence of conflict

If the child's attachment to the mother is built in the first months of the child's life, so very early, the question was naturally asked: What is the relationship between attachment and temperament? We say that the question was asked in a natural way because it is known that temperament, as a major and stable structure of personality, is innate and not acquired. And coincidentally or not, the classic descriptions of temperament are also presented in four forms as well as those of the atonement and date back to antiquity, from doctors Hippocrates and Galenus.

Temperament is defined by psychologists as that structure of personality responsible for the amount of psychic energy with which we are endowed from birth, but especially in the form in which this energy is spent. It is very interesting that the descriptions of the four temperamental types made by Hippocrates have been preserved to this day and are considered correct, they receive the endorsement of renowned physiologists and psychologists such as Pavlov, Jung or Eysenck. After the source of temperamental energies over time was considered to be either the mixture of humor, the body constitution, or the hormones secreted by the endocrine glands, today it is considered that temperamental energy has as main origin in the structure of the central nervous system.

Researchers have agreed that a person's temper cannot be changed. Precisely because of this fact, a man cannot be judged by his temperament, because he, we repeat, is inherited hereditary. But it is no less true that a form of education of temperamental impulses is not only possible but also desirable. The character traits, acquired by the child through education will be those that will shape the temperamental impulses. In other words, a child's behaviors may have as a raw source the inherited temperamental energy, but their finite form can and must be improved by the characteristic features acquired at home, in society and in a school context.

The four temperaments are much better known than the attachment styles, so we do not consider that an extensive description of them is required here. We will point out only a few aspects specific to each classic type of temperament and then insist on how these aspects influence the conflicting behavior in the class, but also on how they interact with attachment styles in triggering and maintaining the same conflicting behavior.

The choleric temperamental type is full of energy, it is strong but impulsive and not very well emotionally balanced. The blood type is also energetic, but more stable and balanced. Phlegmatic, like choleric and blood, is very good in terms of energy, but is much more weighted in his behavioral manifestations as opposed to the other two. Melancholic is the only behavioral type credited by psychologists with a chronic lack of energy, which makes it withdrawn and with anxiety and depression.

The four summary temperamental types described above can be lined up on two axes: that of introversion and that of extraversion, axes which, as Jung described them, they give us the direction in which a person's temperamental energy is spent [11]. Choleric and blood type are considered extroverted types because they spend their energy in the outside environment by investing it in activities with objects or in relationships with other people, while phlegmatic and melancholy direct their energy towards their own self, pay more attention to what is happening to them, how they feel and how they develop internally.

Now, after describing and emphasizing the specifics of attachment as a mental process and temperament as an innate structure of personality, with their styles and types, we have a much easier task in describing how they manifest themselves as determinants of conflict in the classroom. Unfortunately, the conflict in general, but also the conflict in school or in class is ubiquitous, so unavoidable. It is often described as a natural form of incompatibility between one or more persons or between groups, incompatibility generated by interests or antagonistic values. On a macro-social scale, the harshest form of conflict is war, and at school or class level, violent conflict.

Conflicts in school and class are in very diverse forms. They can be intrapersonal, interpersonal conflicts or conflicts between small groups. There can be conflicts between students, between students and teachers, between teachers and parents and even between teachers. Conflicts can also take place around material interests, can be triggered for domination and control, or start from differences of ideas, from exacerbation of competition, due to lack of empathy or even religious reasons.

Until we explain the role that attachment and temperament play in triggering and maintaining the conflict, we must mention that the main determining factor of the conflict is considered by specialists to be aggression. According to psychologists, aggression refers to a diversity of behaviors that have as main target objects, other people or even yourself. Aggression can hurt both the physical body and the mental level and due to this is the most harmful ingredient of a conflict.

Returning to the purpose of this article, we believe that it can now be easy to understand why it is important to know the specific way in which attachment and temperament determine and intervene in class conflicts. Their importance derives mainly from the fact that we inherit one temperament and the other we acquire from the first years of life the attachment and, moreover, from the fact that both are fully manifested throughout life. On the other hand, the ways in which temperamental structures and attachment styles can trigger conflicts within the class are very diverse.

Let's take the case of conflicts between students, which are the most common in the class and imagine that a child with a choleric temperament and an insecure attachment assaults another child, both verbally, as well as physically. In this case we already have an explosive mixture.

I was saying that choleric temperament is known for its tendencies to be impulsive but, at the same time, that only the existence of tendencies cannot be judged negatively. But in combination with an

insecure, insecure attachment, things can get other valences. Impulsive tendencies turn into behaviors, frustrations that have as a source the insecure attachment can amplify their consequences and we can quickly witness aggression with the most unwanted consequences.

Usually, both teachers and teachers at the class level and school principals are in a hurry to quickly and harshly tax impulsive and aggressive behaviors. It is normal for this to happen because all decision-makers in the class and school want to stop the proliferation of abnormal behaviors from the outset, but, if we really want the long-term eradication of these behaviors, we must make a serious analysis of the factors that trigger these behaviors, factors including temperament and attachment occupy their central one.

Very often, conflict, even in which aggression is fully manifested, can have as a direct source the insecure or ambivalent attachment, doubled by depressive episodes and anxiety. Few non-specialists know that child depression does not manifest as an adult. A depressed child will alternate periods of sadness, latency, numbness and non-involvement with episodes of anger manifested very vigorously. On the other hand, anxiety, defined as a fear without a well-specified object, translates into insecurity, which makes an anxious child often react violently, but on the grounds of insecurity and lack of emotional security.

By contrast, it would seem easy to anticipate that a child with a blood temper doubled by a secure attachment will not only not declare conflicts in the classroom, but he will stay away from them. But we can easily deceive ourselves. Such a secure and blood type child can develop ambitions for domination, for placement as part of his desire for school success. In this case, it can become overly competitive, and its competitiveness can become a permanent source of conflict in the classroom.

Or, in another case, such a child with very good learning outcomes can transfer his secure attachment to some teachers, becoming their favorite. Such a very close relationship between teacher and student is perceived strongly positively by teachers, but can acquire extremely negative connotations at the class level. And so, the teacher's favorite can instantly become a nerd for other students, this negative perception becoming a permanent source of harassment and conflict [4].

Conclusions

We could continue with examples of conflicts that can be triggered from other combinations of temperaments with attachment, but we would far exceed the space of an article. We would like to conclude by the mention that teachers are not bypassed by the determining influences of the attachment-temperament combination. We have already seen that attachment migrates from parents to life partner, and temperament we have already said is a brand of our personality for life. What we want to say now, in conclusion, is that the teacher can take an active part in the conflict, and when he does, the specifics of his attachment style and the temperament he has can seriously make its mark on the strategies he will propose for resolving the conflict.

It is thus required, if necessary, for the teacher to become (if he is not already), a good connoisseur of attachment styles and temperamental structures in order to know how they act in triggering and conducting conflicts. Thus, he will know how this knowledge can be used in resolving conflicts that may take place in school or in class.

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